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# THE AWAKENING OF CHINA.

BY K. K. KAWAKAMI.

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## I.

THE moribund condition of the Celestial Empire was first brought conspicuously to light as a consequence of the Chino-Japanese War; and, close on the heels of the Boxer uprising, the break-up of China was "in the air," and the world was busy contemplating how such disruption of this vast dominion would affect the respective interests of the Powers. To-day, the integrity of the Middle Kingdom is almost assured, thanks to the staunch efforts of the lamented Secretary Hay in behalf of the Open Door policy. Japan, impelled by the necessity of protecting her political and economic interests, nay, more, her very security and existence, forced Russia to relinquish her claims in Manchuria. Thus, the war with Russia has raised Japan to such a commanding position that, in the future disposition of the Chinese problem, the Powers must regard her avowed purpose to preserve the integrity of China. Simultaneously, the feeling of national unity in China, in lethargy for centuries, seems unmistakably aroused, as indicated in various events that have taken place of late in rapid succession. This national consciousness, as yet crude and undefined, has received new impetus through the victorious campaign of Japan against her titanic northern foe, and is no doubt destined to play a conspicuous rôle in the resuscitation of the effete Empire. Like all great movements, the present forward movement of the Chinese has its foibles, its follies, its extravagances, as, for instance, in the case of the murder of missionaries at Nanchang, and the riots incident to the Mixed Court affair at Shanghai. But these are merely side issues, unlikely to affect seriously the main course of progress. The apparently anti-foreign spirit displayed by the mobs is not

shared, as at the time of the Boxer uprising, by either the central or local authorities. "China for the Chinese," which is the motto of the national agitation now under way, is decidedly different from "Root out the foreigners," which was the slogan of the Boxers. The appointment of foreign delegations to investigate into the administrative organization of advanced countries, steps taken toward the abolition of the absurd court usages hedging about her ruler, the remarkable increase in the number of students sent abroad for scientific studies, the invitation liberally extended to foreign and especially Japanese teachers to take charge of her educational institutions, the reorganization of her army on a new basis, the significant departure from the abortive curriculums of civil-service examinations previously prevailing, the attempt to build railways under her own control, the united movement in protest against the anti-Chinese agitation in the United States, the Shanghai Mixed Court affair resulting from the assertion by the Chinese officials of the right to the independent conduct of matters relating to the trial and imprisonment of native offenders—these are all unmistakable indications that at last China is really awakening from her protracted slumber.

## II.

The record of recent events in China resembles a leaf from the history of Japan, chronicling the events of some four decades ago, when Western civilization was first ushered into the Land of the Rising Sun. As soon as Japan emancipated herself from the traditions of mediævalism, the Mikado, then young, now one of the leading rulers of the world, solemnly declared to his subjects that "assemblies and councils shall be formed to deliberate on national affairs in the light of public opinion; that learning and knowledge shall be sought for throughout the world." This Imperial declaration was the first of the mile-stones punctuating Japan's highroad to civilization. Many delegates and commissions were sent abroad to inspect and study political and economic conditions in the advanced countries of the West, and Japan's new era was under way.

On the 16th of July, 1905, the Emperor and the Dowager Empress of China issued an Edict providing for the inauguration of the first of several missions to study the political institutions and administrative systems of civilized countries.

The primary object of the Chinese Government in sending these missions abroad is to investigate matters relating to the proposed constitutional government for the Middle Kingdom. In the face of the fact that China, since opening her doors to foreign communication, has shown but little susceptibility towards civilizing influences, the question, "What immediate cause has wrought such a radical change in China's attitude towards Western culture?" naturally presents itself for our consideration. Perhaps it would be ill-considered to ascribe this phenomenon to any single factor, but we are not probably straying far from the truth in asserting that the surprising success of Japan in the greatest of the many wars marking her annals has contributed greatly to the awakening of the dormant Empire. By what secret, the Chinese asked, has our little neighbor achieved so complete a success, and how can this utter collapse of the Northern Colossus be accounted for?

In an effort to answer this question, perhaps the first thing to challenge their attention would be the vital difference between the governmental organizations of the two belligerent nations. The defeat of Russia was a defeat of an absolute monarchy opposed to a constitutional government. The Japanese navy and army were not the only weapons wielded against Russia; the continued internal disturbance proved, as we all know, a serious handicap to the Tsar's campaign. With Japan, on the other hand, there was but a united movement against her enemy. Observing such radical differences between the internal conditions of the warring countries, Viceroys Yuan Shih-kai and Chang Chih-tung represented very strongly to the Emperor and the Dowager Empress the advisability of adopting a constitutional form of government. The inauguration of the foreign missions, already referred to, was, indeed, due to the representations of these progressive statesmen. The first two embassies, which recently visited the United States *en route* to Europe, will be followed by others each year, and thus the leading statesmen of China will have in turn an opportunity to observe at close range the advantages of the political and economic systems of the various Western nations.

### III.

The most conspicuous evidence of China's dawning interest in the world about her lies in the fact that, during the past few

years, she has been sending to Japan many students to be educated at various colleges and schools. She has in addition invited a considerable number of Japanese scholars to teach her schools in different localities. It was in April, 1897, that the Chinese Government first sent two students to Japan. Thereafter, the entries of Chinese students in Japanese schools have gradually increased from year to year, until the signal success of the Japanese in the late war suddenly swelled the number of new arrivals beyond all expectation. There are at present nine thousand Chinese students in Japan; every steamer from China bringing at least a hundred newcomers, while three or four hundred are always waiting in Shanghai for an opportunity to sail. Of the eighteen provinces of China proper only one has so far failed to contribute to the total.

Some of these students are sent by the government, central or local, while many defray their own expenses. No statistics showing the respective numbers of students in these three classes are yet obtainable. The lines of study pursued are indicated by the following statement as to institutions among which Chinese students are distributed: Tokio Imperial University, 5; Kioto Imperial University, 2; Waseda College (private institution consisting of departments of political economy, law and literature), 23; Tokio Law College (private institution), 23; Keio-Giziku College (private institution having departments of political economy, law and literature), 1; Meiji College (private institution for law), 3; Law College (private institution for law), 296; Tokio Higher Normal School (Government institution for the training of high-school and normal-school teachers), 12; Higher Middle School (Government institution), 68; Seijo-Gakko (private military school assisted by the Government), 151; Shinbu-Gakko, 305; Kobun Gakuin (private school for liberal education), 1,100—Total, 1,989.

While there are, doubtless, many advantages to be derived through educating the Chinese in Japan, the disadvantages should be borne in mind. To be sure, there is a semblance of similarity between the two nations, inasmuch as they belong, in the main, to the same stock. Hence, the Japanese, it is claimed, can understand the Chinese to a degree not possible for any Occidental race, and *vice versa*. But when we study the two peoples more

particularly as they are at present, this similarity seems merely superficial. Centuries of separate and independent national existence have developed two radically different types of civilization and racial characteristics. Moreover, the Japanese and Chinese have no common medium through which to communicate their thought. True, Japan has adopted many of the Chinese characters, grafting them, as it were, on her indigenous figures. But these two elements of the Japanese language, thoroughly as they are intermingled, preserve in writing and oral intercourse their original characters, in so far that the Chinese "word-characters" are given entirely new pronunciation, while the Japanese phonetic signs are thrown into sentences to knit together the Chinese ideographs. The result is that, when spoken, the Japanese cannot understand a word of Chinese, and *vice versa*; while, in written language, the Chinaman recognizes his own characters distributed through the Japanese sentence, but is unable to grasp the collective sense.

Such, indeed, is the greatest inconvenience which the Chinese students encounter when studying in Japan. It would, perhaps, require as much time and labor for the Chinese to learn spoken Japanese as to acquire any modern language of the West, although written Japanese would be acquired somewhat more easily. Moreover, aside from pseudo-patriotism we must admit that, compared with European languages and their literature, our language is poor, not allowing of easy and free expression of ideas with their developed inflections. Hence, an attempt to translate scientific or philosophical works from any of the Western languages into Japanese is fraught with difficulties almost, if not quite, insurmountable, and it is doubtful whether the Japanese language is sufficiently capable of development and modification to satisfy the requirements of a higher intellectual culture. It is not without reluctance, therefore, that we require the Chinese students to spend much time upon the Japanese language. By far the greater portion of the authoritative works of the West are not translated into the Japanese language, and it is only through the knowledge of Western languages that the Chinese students have access to the masters of science and philosophy.

But, in the preliminary stages of China's new civilization, Japan's services as her tutor will prove invaluable. The unity of political and economic interests between the two nations makes

the Japanese all the more ardent and sympathetic in their efforts to reach the Chinese. With her population of four hundred millions fully modernized, and with her tremendous natural resources fully developed, China will undoubtedly furnish a wonderful market, where Japan could procure her raw materials and where she might find an outlet for her surplus products. Being conscious of this, the Japanese are looking upon China as their future political and economic ally. In the West, the Chinaman, whether a coolie or a student, is looked upon with repugnance and contempt, and a hundred and one obstacles are thrown in his way. In Japan, on the contrary, he is welcomed with sympathy and deference. As she advances in civilization and culture, China might perhaps do well to seek in the West a higher grade of education; meanwhile, Japan will be her earnest and sympathetic tutor, able to meet all her demands for some time to come.

#### IV.

The significance of Japan's educational influence upon China has been illustrated by the issuance, in the latter country, of an Imperial decree directing that students studying in Japan shall not be required to pass the provincial examinations, an essential preliminary to the final examination in Peking; and that diplomas conferred by Japanese schools and colleges should rank equally with certificates obtained from local examiners in China. In consequence of this decree, Chinese graduates from Japanese schools can proceed at once to Peking to compete for the much-coveted degree which opens the door to the highest official appointments. The first examination under the new system was held in Peking during the past summer, when the first degree was conferred upon eight and the second degree upon four students. These successful candidates have already been assigned to their respective offices, having again gone through two special examinations within the palace and in the presence of the Emperor.

The far-reaching effect of this signal departure from the conservative system of civil-service examinations is not difficult to apprehend, in view of the fact that this venerable competitive system, having a record of some ten centuries, has been conducted on a basis which contributed little, if at all, to the cultivation of independent thought and the promotion of useful learning, still

less to the production of efficient officials, able to cope with the growing complexity of modern governmental functions. The shortcomings of the institution lie in the curriculum which the contestants are required to pursue. This, in common with many other institutions in that stagnant country, has undergone little or no change since its first inauguration, and the poor pupils of to-day are dragging their weary feet along the same thorny, unprofitable path trodden by their ancestors of a thousand years ago. Consisting, first of all, of committing to memory the canonical books, and writing an infinitude of diversely formed characters as the art of chirography; and, secondly, in studying *belles lettres* and composing essays on politico-ethical subjects, setting forth ideas bequeathed by ancient sages and savants, the occupation of the student is so widely removed from practical purposes that, when finally rewarded with the meed of civil office, he finds himself quite unacquainted with the administrative business of the government. The departure from this abortive curriculum and the substitution of modern studies as the basis of competition, will realize an intellectual revolution, the extent and results of which it would be difficult to foretell. Like the man in the legend, who, needing a sewing-needle, made one by grinding a crowbar on a piece of granite, the Chinese *litterati* have wonderful power of patience, which, turned into a right channel, should work marvels in the advancement of science and art. All the zeal and ardor which the students have hitherto applied to the barren study of chirography, canonical books, and *belles lettres*, will, when the Peking Government remodels the entire examination system on this new basis, be deflected to the pursuit of modern scientific studies. By waiving for her students in Japan the usual provincial examinations, the Tsing Dynasty has taken a long stride towards the inauguration of a modern *régime*.

## V.

No one has been more instrumental in hastening this forward movement than Yuan Shih-kai, Viceroy of Chih-li, the metropolitan province of China. A staunch antagonist of Japan until a decade ago and the real instigator of the Chino-Japanese War, as the minister of China at the Seoul court, this able statesman, once convinced of Japan's ability and sincere desire to rescue China from the perils of Western aggression, has, with the sym-

pathetic assistance of Japan, converted himself into a harbinger of modern civilization. Yuan Shih-kai is generally recognized as the ablest statesman of China since the death of Li Hung-chang, his master in statecraft and statesmanship. Possessing many of the traits of the deceased statesman, Yuan is a resourceful diplomat and a man of broad calibre and wide view. With Russia the upper, and Japan the nether, millstone, between which the Manchus have vainly struggled, this tactful Viceroy had been but half-hearted in seeking Japan's assistance until the triumphant campaign of the islanders indisputably demonstrated their ability to checkmate Russian aggression in the Far East. Judging from his recent acts and movements, the Viceroy is now a sincere friend of Japan. It is mostly due to his influence that almost two hundred Japanese are now serving the central and provincial governments of China in various capacities. Some of them are teachers in colleges and schools, some military officers, some police officials, while others are employed as financial or economic advisers.

Foremost in the reform programme conceived by Yuan Shih-kai is the diffusion of modern education. His coveted plan is to readjust the entire educational system of China after advanced principles of pedagogy. First of all, he will try his plan in his own province, Chih-li, and, when convinced of its practicability, he will embark on the gigantic task of remodelling the educational institutions of the remaining seventeen provinces. In carrying out this plan, the Viceroy turns to Japan for cooperation and assistance. It is assumed that Japan has not only imported, but so assimilated, Western civilization as to make it adaptable to the peculiar conditions and characteristics of the nation. Western civilization, having thus undergone a process of Orientalization at the hand of the Japanese, would, it is held, benefit the Chinese rather than a civilization directly imported from the Occident. Following the plan adopted by Japan a few decades ago, Yuan has already established a normal school in Pao-ting; while, with a view to reforming the police system of his province, he has instituted a school for training the police officials.

Not only is Yuan the forerunner of educational reform, but he is also the most ardent advocate of military reform. After organizing his provincial army in accordance with the German and, latterly, after the Japanese system, he has finally expanded

his provincial standard into a national reform movement, in accordance with which the entire country is divided into six military districts supervised by a general staff. This plan is now to be reconstructed; and the number of military districts will be increased to twenty, each having four regiments of infantry, one regiment of cavalry, an engineer corps and artillery in proportion. If this schedule is carried out thoroughly, China will have in five years, it is estimated, 500,000 trained men ready for service in the field. The importance of this readjustment cannot be emphasized too strongly, inasmuch as the existing provincial armies, maintained by the Viceroy without either unity or harmony, are utterly unable, in case of such emergencies as the Boxer disturbance, to protect trade and commerce, which the great trading nations are justified in demanding. Holding military power in his hands, controlling the educational, financial and judicial departments, endowed with the uncommonly strong will essential to a reformer, and, what is of greater moment in a despotic government, enjoying the confidence of the Emperor and the Dowager Empress, Yuan Shih-kai may find himself in a position to execute what he considers imperative for the rehabilitation of his country.

## VI.

After Yuan Shih-kai, Chang Chih-tung stands the most prominent figure in the present reform movement in China. The Viceroy of the two great southern provinces, Hu-peh and Hu-nan, Chang enjoys power second to none of the eight Viceroys save the Viceroy of the metropolitan province. He had been a convert to modernism before Yuan Shih-kai renounced his allegiance to rusted mediævalism. When the Emperor Kuang-hsü first enunciated his radical but untactful measures of internal reform, Chang openly declared himself ready to support this progressive ruler. It was then that he wrote the book "*Chun Hioh Pien*," emphasizing the necessity of a change in the ancient ideas and institutions. It was a critical moment when the conservatives were bitterly set against any reform that savored of the Occident, while the progressives, fanned by the host of "scoffers," were ignorant of what was radical in Chinese affairs, looking with contempt upon the venerable *literati* and *connoisseurs* imbued with the oracular wisdom contained in the canonical books of the ancient sages. A collision between the two seemed imminent.

Moved by this perilous situation, Chang summoned all his patriotism and literary talent in producing "*Chun Hioh Pien*." The book was hailed by the liberals with wild enthusiasm, while the author's influence and personality, coupled with his elegant literary style, could not but induce even the most obdurate of conservatives to read this work with respect and attention. Loyal to the moral ideals of his country, the Viceroy, nevertheless, shows neither hesitancy nor remorse in denouncing the waywardness of his country, applying the lash without stint upon the backs of his own people and their ruler.

While writing "*Chun Hioh Pien*," Viceroy Chang was placed in an extremely dangerous position. Had he not had under his command a powerful army with modern training, it is all but certain that the monstrous *coup d'état* of the Dowager Empress, and the fiendish deeds of Prince Tuan, would have involved the Viceroy in the common fate which overtook the members of the Reform Party who dyed the scaffold crimson with their blood. And yet he did not feel that he could safely remain faithful to the reformers at that trying moment when they needed his assistance most urgently, and the hope of China's regeneration, held out by the young Emperor Kuang-hsü, passed away like the trail of a meteor. But the five odd years intervening since the Boxer disturbance have wrought a signal change. Yuan Shih-kai, who, as the Viceroy of Shan-tung, was then not entirely free from prejudice against Western civilization, is now, as the more powerful Viceroy of Chih-li, indisputably an earnest herald of modern knowledge. Thus, with the cooperation of the strongest official who ever graced a Viceroy's throne, Chang Chih-tung begins to realize the plan which he laid down several years ago.

Chang is perhaps a warmer friend of Japan than Yuan. It was the former who first sent students to Japan, the number from his province now totalling almost five hundred. Under him scores of Japanese instructors are teaching in various colleges and schools in the two provinces of Hu-nan and Hu-peh, while, in his provincial government, many Japanese officials are assisting him in various capacities.

## VII.

In a study of the present forward movement in China, the question of railroads should not be overlooked, for in all countries the railroad has ever been one of the most effective civilizing

agencies. It is true that the Chinese have been stubbornly averse to the extension of railways. But may we not attribute this sentiment to causes other than the mere ignorance and superstition prevailing among the people? Mr. William B. Parsons, who was in China as the Chief Engineer of the American China Development Company, in his interesting book "An American Engineer in China," tells us that the general popular opposition to railways in China is two-sided, being partly due to religious superstition and partly to the fear of competition against manual labor. That is true enough. But in addition to such religious and economic reasons, may we not seek some political reason wherein we can more heartily sympathize with the Chinese?

In the consideration of this question it is important to remember what a significant part the railways have played in the execution of colonial policies enunciated by the Powers, and especially by Russia, in the Far East. Like the Spanish missionaries of yore, who went forth into different parts of the world openly bearing the standard of Christ, but in reality the fore-runners of the *conquistador*, the railway concessions in China have been wrung from the Manchu Government by the European Powers ostensibly for the purpose of developing the means of communication, under the thin guise of which lurks a covetous desire for territorial acquisition. The case of Manchuria is sufficient to start an alarm among the Chinese. Spanning the Amoor on the eastern boundary of Manchuria, the great Trans-Siberian railway extended itself into the dominion of the Middle Kingdom down to the Yellow Sea, and a vast territory of 370,000 square miles supporting 8,500,000 people with enormous agricultural and mineral resources, would have been permanently lost to China, had not the little warriors of Nippon gallantly taken arms against the giant intruder. Nor is Russia's design confined to northern China. Paramount behind the Belgian syndicate which procured a railroad concession from Peking to Hankow, it is generally believed, is the influence of Russia, whose ambition it is either to form ultimately a through line from St. Petersburg to the Yang-tze River, or to have something ready to offer in trade for other concessions in the North of more immediate benefit to herself and of a less menacing nature to Great Britain. This, in itself, is alarming enough; but, when it is remarked that the whole country is vivisected, as it were, by six different foreign

nations into so many sections of railroad concessions as a preliminary step toward the establishment of "spheres of influence," even the Chinaman rubs his sleepy eyes and suspects that a great menace is hovering over his country.

It was but yesterday that Russia's grasping hand was frustrated in Southern Manchuria, her Eastern China Railway being ceded to Japan. Notwithstanding this, a thousand miles of the Trans-Siberian system still traverses the territory of China, and in addition Russia claims, as conceded, branches from the Belgian Hankow-Peking line, aggregating 653 miles. South from Tien-tsin and in the province of Shan-tung, the German influence is paramount, procuring a concession for a local system totalling some 375 miles, together with another concession for a portion of main line between Tien-tsin and Ching-kiang, reaching a mileage of 470. The trunk and branch lines approaching Shanghai belong to English syndicates, amounting to some 1,400 miles, besides which England has a preponderating share in the Peking Syndicate, an Anglo-Italian combination, possessing a concession for 125 miles in the provinces of Shan-si and Shen-si. Through the heart of China, from Peking on the north to Hankow, the metropolis of the interior, on the south, a Belgian syndicate has completed the construction of a trunk line extending over 700 miles, in which France and Russia are understood to have a large interest. From Hankow southward as far as Canton, the American China Development Company was to have built a line to a length of 918 miles, the concession for which has been cancelled by the Chinese Government. Finally, in the extreme south, France has a concession for 800 miles. By the side of this enormous mileage covered by foreign *cessionnaires*, the Chinese Government holds but some 550 miles of railroad already constructed. Such a situation is both anomalous and threatening. The motives of the European Powers in exacting railway concessions from the Manchus are political rather than commercial. Eager to establish a foothold on Chinese territory, they vie with each other in seizing advantageous positions. The railroads constructed under such circumstances would be like cords of steel ever tightening round the inert Empire. With this record of foreign concessions before us, is it just to put all the blame at the door of the Chinaman alone for the troubles and difficulties encountered in the construction of railways in China? In

justice, the Chinaman's antipathy to the railroad cannot be ascribed to his ignorance or superstition only.

Since China bought up the Hankow-Canton concession, she has also been negotiating with England for the cancellation of the Tien-tsin-Chin-kiang concession, in which Germany has a large share. The British Government has replied that it is willing to comply with China's request, provided Germany agrees to relinquish her share. This cancellation movement does not seem to be a mere manifestation of anti-foreign spirit, accompanied by no practical intention on the part of the Chinese to build railways of their own. A recent report from Canton to the effect that the rush of applicants for shares of the Hankow-Canton railway was so great that the streets were blocked with Chinese, is a most emphatic evidence that the natives no more cherish prejudice against the railway. "One of the first steps toward the realization of our new national ideas," says Sir Chentung Liang-cheng, the Chinese Minister at Washington, "would be the construction, under Chinese auspices, of a great trunk line to traverse the central and most fertile provinces of China from Canton to Peking." The day when the Chinese Government, having bought a railroad, threw rails, cars and locomotives into the river, as happened in the case of the Wu-sung line in 1877, has passed, never to return, and the time seems really at hand when the actual system covering the Empire with its lacework of steel may not be projected on paper alone, but in actual process of construction.

It would doubtless be rash to expect a nation comprising nearly one-third of the human race to cast off in a day the lethargy of centuries. Many a generation shall have passed ere it has transformed itself into a new life; but that it is under a sure process of transformation, there is hardly room to doubt.

When China, invigorated and enlightened, with her vast natural resources exploited, her enormous population roused from the torpor of the past, her army and navy recast after advanced models, shall have formed an *entente cordiale* with Japan, bound to develop sooner or later into a political and economic alliance, the Mikado's subjects will begin to realize that the twelve hundred million *yen* and eighty thousand lives lost in the recent war were sacrificed for an issue vastly greater than they dreamed of.

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